DIRECTIONS
OF THE
GENERALL ASSEMBLY
CONCERNING
Secret and Private Worſhip, and mutuall edification, for cheriſhing Piety, for maintaining Unity, and avoiding Schiſm and Diviſion.

WITH
An Act for obſerving theſe Directions, and for cenſuring ſuch as uſe to neglect
FAMILY WORSHIP.

AND
An Act againſt ſuch as withdraw themſelves from the Publike Worſhip in their owne
CONGREGATIONS.

EDINBURGH,
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1650.

Act for obſerving the following Directions, and for cenſuring ſuch as uſe to neglect Family Worſhip.

THe Generall Aſſembly after mature deliberation, doth approve the following Rules and Directions, for cheriſhing Piety and preventing Diviſion and Schiſme, and doth appoint Miniſters and Ruling Elders in each Congregation, to take ſpeciall care that theſe Directions be obſerved and followed; As likewiſe that Presbyteries, and Provinciall Synods enquire and make tryall, whether the ſaids Directions be duely obſerved in their bounds, and to reprove or cenſure (according to the qualitie of the offence) ſuch as ſhall be found to be reproveable or cenſurable therein. And to the end that theſe Directions may not be rendered ineffectuall and unprofitable among ſome through the uſuall neglect of the very ſubſtance of the ducty of Family Worſhip, The Aſſembly doth further require, and appoint Miniſters and Ruling Elders, to make diligent ſearch and inquiry in the Congregations committed to their charge reſpectivly, whether there be among them any Family or Families which uſe to neglect this neceſſary duty; And if any ſuch Family be found, the head of that Family is to bee firſt admoniſhed privately to amend this fault; And in caſe of his continuing therein, he is to bee gravely and ſadly reproved by the Seſſion. After which reproof, if he be found ſtill to neglect Family Worſhip, Let him bee for his obſtinacy, in ſuch an offence, ſuſpended and debarred from the Lords Supper, as being juſtly eſteemed unworthy to communicate therein till he amend.

A. Ker.

DIRECTIONS
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Concerning
Secret and private Worſhip,
and mutuall edification, for cheriſhing Piety, for maintaining *Unity, and avoiding Schiſme and Diviſion.*

BEſides the pulick Worſhip in Congregations, mercifully eſtabliſhed in this Land, in great putity; It is expedient and neceſſar, that Secret Worſhip of each perſon alone, and Private Worſhip of Families be preſſed and ſet up: That with Nationall Reformation, the profeſſion and power of godlineſſe both Perſonall and Domeſtick be advanced.

I. And firſt for ſecret worſhip; It is moſt neceſſar, that every one apart and by themſelves be given to prayer and Meditation, The unſpeakable benefite whereof is beſt known to them who are moſt exerciſed therein: This being the mean whereby in a ſpeciall way, communion with God is intertained, and right preparation for all other duties obtained: And therefore it becommeth not onely Paſtours within their ſeveral Charges, to preſſe perſons of all ſorts to perform this duty Morning and Evening, and at other occaſions, but alſo it is incumbent to the head of every Familie, to have a care that both themſelves and all within their charge bee dayly diligent herein.

II. The

II. The ordinary duties comprehended under the exercise of Piety, which should be in Families when they are conveened to that effect, are these: first, Prayer and praises performed, with a speciall reference as well to the publick condition of the Kirk of God and this Kingdome, as to the present case of the Familie, and every member thereof. Next, reading of Scriptures with Catechising in a plain way, that the understandings of the simpler may be the better enabled to profit under the Publick Ordinances, and they made more capable to understand the Scriptures when they are read; Together with godly conferences, tending to the edification of all the members, in the most holy Faith: As also, admonition and rebuke upon just reasons from these who have Authoritie in the Family.

III. As the Charge and Office of interpreting the holy Scriptures, is a part of the Minesteriall Calling, which none (howsoever otherwise qualified) should take upon him in any place, but he that is duly called thereunto by God and his Kirk: So in every Familie where there is any that can read, The holy Scriptures should be read ordinarily to the Family; And it is commendable that thereafter they conser, and by way of conference make some good use of what hath been read and heard: As for example if any sin be reproved in the Word read, use may be made thereof, to make all the Family circumspect and watchful against the same; Or, if any judgement be threatned or mentioned to have been inflicted in that portion of Scripture which is read, use may be made to make all the Family fear, lest the same or a worse judgement befall them, unlesse they beware of the sin that procured it. And finally, if any duty be required, or comfort held forth in a promise use may be made to stir up themselves to imploy Christ for strength to enable them for doing the commanded duty, and to apply the offered comfort; In all which the Master of the Family is to have the chief hand; And any member of the Familie may propone a question or doubt for resolution.

IIII. The head of the Family is to take care that none of the Family withdraw himself from any part of Family Worship,

Worſhip: And ſeeing the ordinary performance of all the parts of Family Worſhip belongeth properly to the head of the Family, The Miniſter is to ſtir up ſuch as are laſie, and train up ſuch as are weake to a fitnes for theſe exerciſes: It being alwayes free to perſons of qualitie to entertain one approven by the Presbyterie for performing Family Exerciſe; And in other families where the head of the Family is unfit, that another conſtantly reſiding in the Family approven by the Miniſter and Seſſion, may be imployed in that ſervice; Wherein the Miniſter and Seſſion are to be counta ble to the Presbyterie. And if a Miniſter by divine providence be brought to any Family it is requiſit, that at no time he conveen a part of the Family for Worſhip ſecluding the reſt; except in ſingular caſes, ſpecially concerning theſe parties, which (in Chriſtian prudence) need not, or ought not to be imparted to others.

V. Let no Idler who hath no particular calling, or vagrant perſon under pretence of a calling, be ſuffered to performe Worſhip in Families, to or for the ſame: Seeing perſons tainted with errours or aiming at diviſion, may be ready (after that manner) to creep into houſes and lead captive ſilly and unſtable ſouls.

VI. At Family worſhip a ſpeciall care is to be had that each Family keep by themſelves; Neither requiring, inviting, nor admitting perſons from divers Families; Unleſs it be theſe who are lodged with them, or at meal, or otherwiſe with them upon ſome lawfull occaſion.

VII. Whatſoever hath been the effects, and fruits of meetings of perſons of divers Families in the times of corruption or trouble (in which caſes many things are commendable, which otherwiſe are not tollerable) Yet when God hath bleſsed us with Peace and the purity of the Goſpel, ſuch meetings of perſons of divers families (except in the caſes mentioned in theſe directions) are to be diſapproved, as tending to the hinderance of the Religious exerciſe of each Family by it ſelf, to the prejudice of the publick Miniſtery, to the renting of the Families of particular Congregations, and (in progreſse of time) of the whole Kirk: beſides

many

many offences which may come thereby, to the hardning of the hearts of carnall men and grief of the godly.

VIII. On the Lords, day after every one of the Family apart, and the whole Family together have sought the Lord, in whose hands the preparation of mens hearts are) to fit them for the publick worship, and to blesse to them the publick Ordinances; The Master of the Family ought to take care that all within his charge repair to the publick Worship, that he and they may joyn with the rest of the Congregation; And, the publick Worship being finished, after prayer, he shall take an account what they have heard; and thereafter to spend the rest of the time which they may spare, in Catechising and in spiritual conferences upon the word of God; Or else (going apart) they ought to apply themselves to reading, meditation, and secret prayer, that they may confirme and increase their Communion with God; That so the profite which they found in the publick Ordinances maybe cherished and promoved, and they more edified unto eternall life.

IX. So many as can conceive prayer, ought to make use of that gift of God: Albeit those who are rude and weaker may begin at a set forme of prayer; But so, as they be not sluggish in stirring up in themselves (according to their dayly necessities) the spirit of Prayer, which is given to all the children of God in some measure. To which effect, they ought to be the more fervent and frequent in secret Prayer to God, for enabling of their hearts to conceive, and their tongues to expresse convenient desires to God for their Familie. And in the mean time, for their greater encouragement, let these materials of Prayer be meditated upon, and made use of, as followeth:

Let them confesse to God how unworthy they are to come in his presence, and how unfit to worship his Majestie; and therefore earnestly ask of God the spirit of Prayer.

They are to confesse their sins, and the sins of the Family, accusing, judging, and condemning themselves for them, till they bring their souls to some measure of true humiliation.

They are to pour out their souls to God, in the Name of Christ,

Christ, by the ſpirit, for forgivenes of ſin, for Grace to repent, to believe, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and Godly; and that they may ſerve God with joy and delight, walking before him.

They are to give thanks to God for his many mercies to his people, and to themſelves, and eſpecially for his love in Chriſt, and for the light of the Goſpel.

They are to pray for ſuch particular benefits, Spirituall and Temporall, as they ſtand in need of for the time, (whether it be Morning or Evening) as health or ſickneſe, proſperity or adverſity.

They ought to pray for the Kirk of Chriſt in generall, for all the reformed Kirks, and for this Kirk in particular, and for all that ſuffer for the Name of Chriſt; for all our Superiours, The Kings Majeſty, the Queen, and their Children, for the Mageſtrates, Miniſters, and the whole body of the Congregation whereof they are members, as well for their neighboures abſent in their lawfull affairs as for thoſe that are at home.

The prayer may be cloſed with an earneſt deſire, that God may be glorified in the comming of the Kingdome of his Son, and in the doing of his will; And with aſsurance that themſelves are accepted, and what they have asked according to his will ſhall be done.

X. Theſe exerciſes ought to be performed in great ſincerity, without delay, laying aſide all exerciſes of worldly buſineſe or hinderances, Notwithſtanding the mockings of Atheiſts, and profane men. In reſpect of the great mercies of God to this Land, And of his ſevere Corrections wherewith lately he hath exerciſed us. And to this effect, perſons of eminency (and all Elders of the Kirk) not only ought to ſtir up themſelves and their Families to diligence herein; But alſo to concurre effectually, that in all other Families, where they have power and Charge, the ſaid Exerciſes be conſcionably performed.

XI. Beſides the ordinary duties in Families which are abovementioned, extraordinary duties both of humiliation and thankſgiving are to be carefully performed in Families, when

when the Lord by extraordinary occasions (private or publick) calleth for them.

XII. Seeing the Word of God requireth, That we should consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; Therefore, at all times, and specially in this time wherein profanity abounds, and mockers, walking after their own lusts, think it strange that others run not with them to the same excesse of riot, Every member of this Kirk ought to stir up themselves and one another to the duties of mutuall Edification, by instruction, admonition, rebuke exhorting one another to manifest the Grace of God, in denying ungodlinesse and worldly lusts, and in living godly, soberly, and righteously in this present world, by comforting the feeble minded, and praying with, or, for one another: Which duties respectively are to be performed upon special occasions offered by divine providence; As namely, when under any calamity, crosse or great difficulty, counsell or comfort is sought, Or when an offender is to be reclaimed by private admonition, and if that bee not effectuall, by joyning one or two more in the admonition, according to the rule of Christ; that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

XIII. And because it is not given to every one to speak a word in season to a wearied or distressed conscience, It is expedient, that a person (in that case) finding no ease after the use of all ordinary means private & publick, have their redresse to their own Pastour, or some experienced Christian: But if the person troubled in conscience, be of that condition, or of that sex, that discretion, modesty, or fear of scandal, requireth a godly, grave and secret friend to be present with them in their said addresse, It is expedient that such a friend be present.

XIV. When persons of divers Families are brought together by divine providence, being abroad upon their particular Vocations, or any necessary occasions, As they would have the Lord their GOD with them whithersoever they go, they ought to walk with GOD, and not neglect the duties of Prayer, and Thanksgiving, but take care that the

the ſame be performed by ſuch as the company ſhall judge fitteſt: And that they likewiſe take heed that no corrupt communication proceed out of their mouth, but that which is good, to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace to the hearers.

The driſt and ſcope of all theſe Directions is no other but that upon the one part, the power and practiſe of godlineſſe among all the Miniſters and Members of this Kirk, according to their ſeverall places and vocations, may be cheriſhed and advanced and all impietie and mocking of Religious exerciſes ſuppreſſed: And upon the other part, that under the name and pretext of Religious Exerciſes, no ſuch meetings or practiſes be allowed as are apt to breed errour, ſcandall, ſchiſme, contempt or miſregard of the publick Ordinances and Miniſters, or neglect of the duties of particular Callings, or ſuch other evils as are the works not of the Spirit, but of the fleſh, and are contrary to Truth and Peace.

A. Ker.

Act againſt ſuch as Withdraw themſelves from the publick worſhip in their own Congregation.

SInce it hath pleaſed GOD of his infinite goodneſſe to bleſſe this Kirk within this Nation, with the riches of the Goſpel, in giving to us his Ordinance in great purity, liberty, and withall a comely and well eſtabliſhed order: the Aſſembly in the zeal of God, for preſerving order, Unity, and Peace in the Kirk, for maintaining that reſpect which is due to the Ordinances and Miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt, for preventing Schiſme, noiſome Errours, and all unlawfull practiſes, which may follow on the Peoples withdrawing themſelves from their own Congregations, Doth charge every Miniſter to be diligent in fulfilling his Miniſtery, to be holy and grave in his converſation, to be faithfull

full in Preaching, declaring the whole Counsel of GOD, and as he hath occasion from the Text of Scripture, to reprove the sins and errours, and presse the duties of the time, and in all those to observe the rules prescribed by the Acts of Assembly; wherein if he be negligent he is to be censured by his own Presbyterie. As also ordains every member in every congregation, to keep their own Paroch Kirk, to communicate there in the Word and Sacraments; And if any person or persons shall hereafter usually absent themselves from their own Congregations, except in urgent cases made known to, and approven by the Presbyterie, The Ministers of these Congregations whereunto they resort, shall both in publick by Preaching, and in private by admonition, shew their dislike of their with-drawing from their own Minister, That in so doing, They may witnesse to all that hear them, their due care to strengthen the hands of their fellow-labourers in the work of the Lord, their detestation of any thing that may tend to Separation, or any of the abovementioned evils: Hereby their own Flock will be confirmed in their stedfastnesse, and the unstable spirits of others will be rectified. Likeas the Minister of that Congregation from which they do withdraw, shall labour first by private admonition to reclaim them: And if any after private admonition given by their own Pastour, do not amend, in that case the Pastour shal dilate the foresaid persons to the Sessions, who shall cite & censure them as contemners of the comly order of the Kirk; and if the matter be not taken orderwith there, It is to be brought to the presbyterie: For the better observing whereof, the Presbyteries that Visitation of their severall Kirks and Provincial Assemblies, in their censure of the severall Presbyteries, shall enquire hereanent: which Inquiry and report shall be registrate in the Provincial Books, that their diligence may be seen in the Generall Assembly.

A. Ker.

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